

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-27. (Canceled)

28. (Previously Presented) A deck system comprising:

a plurality of laterally spaced joists;

a plurality of boards extending across and supported by the joists, each of said boards presenting an upper lip and a lower lip, said upper and lower lips defining a pair of longitudinally extending grooves on generally opposite sides of the board, and said lower lip having a thickness "E"; and

a plurality of fasteners rigidly coupled to the joists, each of said fasteners presenting a pair of protrusions having a height "F," each of said protrusions being received in a respective groove of a respective board in a substantially complementary fashion, wherein "E" is at least 1% greater than "F."

29. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, wherein "E" is at least about 2% greater than "F."

30. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 29, wherein "E" is at least about 5% greater than "F."

31. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 28, wherein the protrusions exert a downward holding force on the lower lips when the protrusions are at least partially received within the grooves.

32. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 31, wherein the downward holding force is due to the thickness of the lower lips being at least 1% greater than the height of the protrusions.

33. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 31, wherein the downward holding force inhibits upward movement of the boards relative to the fasteners and joists.

34. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 31, wherein the fasteners are comprised of a resilient material that allows the protrusions to be elastically flexed when the protrusions are at least partially received within the grooves.

35. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 34, wherein the flexing of the protrusions facilitates maintaining the downward holding force on the lower lips.

36. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 28, wherein the fasteners securely couple the boards to the joists when the protrusions are at least partially received within the grooves.

37. (Currently Amended) A deck system comprising:
a plurality of laterally spaced joists;
a first board extending across and supported by the joists, the first board presenting a pair of similarly configured opposite sides, each of the sides including a pair of spaced-apart longitudinally extending lips presenting opposing inwardly facing surfaces; and
a fastener rigidly coupled to at least one of the joists, the fastener presenting at least one protrusion, the protrusion being operable to contact both of the inwardly facing surfaces on one of the sides of the first board to continually exert a first downward holding force on one of the lips to force the first board towards the joist.

38. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the first holding force more securely couples the first board to the joist than if no first holding force is applied.

39. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the protrusion is formed of a resilient material such that the protrusion flexes to facilitate exertion of the first holding force.

40. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the first holding force inhibits upward movement of the first board relative to the fastener and joists.

41. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the thickness of the lip upon which the first holding force is exerted is at least 1% greater than the height of the protrusion relative to the joist when the protrusion is not flexed.

42. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 41, wherein the thickness of the lip upon which the first holding force is exerted is at least 2% greater than the height of the protrusion relative to the joist when the protrusion is not flexed.

43. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 42, wherein the thickness of the lip upon which the first holding force is exerted is at least 5% greater than the height of the protrusion relative to the joist when the protrusion is not flexed.

44. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the first holding force securely couples the first board to the joists.

45. (Currently Amended) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the deck system includes a second board, the second board being substantially similar to the first board, wherein the fastener exerts a second downward holding force on the second board such that the first holding force and the second holding force inhibit movement of the first board and second board relative to the joists thereby forming a more rigid deck system than if the holding forces were not present.

46. (Currently Amended) A method of coupling a plurality of boards to a plurality of support members, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) rigidly attaching a first fastener to a first support member, the first fastener having at least one protrusion;
- (b) positioning a first board across the first support member and against the rigidly-attached first fastener such that the protrusion of the first fastener is at least partially received in a first longitudinal groove of the first board to form a mating relationship between the first board and the first fastener, wherein the positioning of the first board and the first fastener in the mating relationship causes the protrusion of the first fastener to flex and exert a first downward holding force on the first board;
- (c) positioning a second fastener against the first board such that a protrusion of the second fastener is at least partially received in a second longitudinal groove of the first board to form a mating relationship between the first board and the second fastener; and
- (d) rigidly attaching the second fastener to the first support member while maintaining the mating relationship between the first board and the first and second fasteners.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein the first holding force inhibits movement of the first board relative to the first fastener and the first support member.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein the first holding force holds the first board against the first support member.

49. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 46, wherein rigidly attaching the second fastener to the first support member causes the protrusion of the second fastener to flex and exert a second downward holding force on the first board.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the first and second holding forces are exerted on generally opposite sides of the first board.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the first and second holding forces hold the first board against the first support member.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the first and second holding forces securely couple the first board to the first support member.

53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein the longitudinal grooves are generally defined by an upper lip and a lower lip and the first holding force is exerted against the lower lip.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53, wherein the thickness of the lower lip is at least 1% greater than the height of the protrusions relative to the support members when the protrusions are not flexed.

55. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 54, wherein the thickness of the lower lip is at least 2% greater than the height of the protrusions relative to the support members when the protrusions are not flexed.

56. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55, wherein the thickness of the lower lip is at least 5% greater than the height of the protrusions relative to the support members when the protrusions are not flexed.

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46; and

(e) positioning a second board across the first support member and against the second fastener to thereby form a mating relationship between the second board and the second fastener.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the second fastener is disposed generally between the first and second boards.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein the second fastener causes a gap to be maintained between the first and second boards.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the holding force inhibits movement of the boards relative to one another, movement of the support members relative to one another, and movement of the boards relative to the support members, thereby forming a more rigid deck system than if the holding force were not present.